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Anti-semitism on the left

Submitted by cathy n on 3 August, 2006 - 1:21

Thomas Haury has written extensively about left anti-semitism in both pre- and post-unification Germany.

His best-known work is "Anti-Semitism on the Left", a lengthy study of anti-semitism (anti-Zionism) in the early years of the German Democratic Republic. Other writings by Haury include "The German Left in the Goldhagen Debate" and "The Logic of German Anti-Zionism".

In the latter Haury called for a Left which "shows up and denounces anti-Zionism for what it is, and which no longer allows it to pass muster as 'left-wing'."

The following is an abridged translation of a speech given by Haury in Halle (Saale) in 2003. His speech summarised the arguments he had developed at greater length in "The Logic of German Anti-Zionism".

Haury defines modern anti-semitism as a reaction against the development of capitalism. It is not a form of racism but an 'explanation' of how the world works. The 'anti-Zionism' and 'anti-imperialism' of the Left today, argues Haury, explain the workings of the world in similar terms.

Consequently, concludes Haury, when the Israel-Palestine conflict is analysed in terms of contemporary left 'anti-imperialism', the result is an 'anti-Zionism' which consists of anti-semitic stereotyping.

Haury is arguably too sweeping in his undifferentiated dismissals of "the Left" (and it is not always clear which "Left" he is talking about). Part of what he writes also needs to be understood in the specific context of debates on the German left.

At the same time, however, Haury shows up left anti-Zionism for what it is: a form of anti-semitism, expressed in the language of a pseudo anti-imperialism.

Readers' comments on Haury's arguments are welcome.

Introduction:

In the 1990s the question of left anti-semitism triggered strong emotions and even aggression: surely it is impossible for people on the Left to be anti-semitic? How can the two go together? After all, left-wingers are anti-fascist, leftist, and revolutionary; therefore, they cannot be racist and anti-semitic.

By way of an introduction, let me quote five statements:

"Do not buy from Jews!"

The "Jewish world movement" is led by "Jewish multi-millionaires who are to be found everywhere in the world," and who "meet up again and again in private conferences."

"The domination of the world's media by Jewish propaganda" is an established fact.

"The goal of Jewish politics: World domination?!"

Jewry is "the enemy of all people."

These are anti-semitic statements. But all five statements are to be found in left-wing propaganda against Israel. The second one is from the Palestine Solidarity magazine *Al Karamah* in the 1980s, the third is from the *Anti-Imperialist Information Bulletin* in 1971, the fourth is from the "Vienna Anti-Imperialist Co-ordination" in 2002, and the fifth is from the "Hamburg Autonomous Middle East Group" in 1989.

But I have falsified the quotes in one decisive respect: where "Zionist" or "Zionism" is mentioned, I have replaced these terms by "Jewish" and "Jewry". The statement "Do not buy from Jews!", however, is to be found in exactly those words in the *Green Calendar*, published by "Edition Sunshine" in 1982.

There is therefore clearly anti-semitism on the Left which manifests itself as anti-Zionism. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it must be said, this was not a question of individual persons or individual groups, but of the mainstream Left. There were differences in degree, but the basic positions were the same everywhere. How is this anti-semitic anti-Zionism of the Left to be explained?

Modern Anti-Semitism:

People generally talk of anti-semitism when Jews are discriminated against, persecuted, or

even killed because of their religion. But the anti-semitic practice of discrimination and persecution is preceded by the anti-semitic ideology. And it is the latter which is of decisive importance for the fact that it is precisely Jews who are identified as being guilty in the first place.

Anti-semitism must therefore primarily be understood as a particular view of the world, not as a particular practice. In the course of the nineteenth century anti-semitism emerged throughout Europe as an ideological reaction to the rapid spread of capitalist society and the social upheavals this triggered. Anti-semitism is a world view which provides a negative interpretation and explanation of modern society in its three principle aspects.

Central to anti-semitism is first of all its explanation of the modern capitalist world economy. This is not seen as a process which unfolds of its own accord in the absence of a particular subject. Rather, it is seen as an exploitative project consciously put into effect by evil people. "The Jews" were behind capitalism, they dominated the international economy, they are held responsible for all crises and bankruptcies.

In providing this explanation anti-semitism carries out another decisive reduction and division. The sphere of circulation, i.e. trade, banks, stock exchanges, predatory capital, is seen as the fundamental evil of capitalism. On the other hand, production and handicrafts, industry which produces goods, and creative capital are seen as the positive pole. Value-creating "German labour" is counterposed to "Jewish plundering" and "Jewish parasitism".

Following the same pattern, anti-semitism explains the second important aspect of modern society: politics, the modern state, the democratic argument, different and conflicting interests, and even socialism and Bolshevism. Those who bear the blame for these things must be identified as well.

"The Jews" are the real rulers in the background. Behind the scenes they steer and determine the outcome of everything which goes on. They buy politicians or entire governments, they dominate the press, and they determine public opinion. Through their financial power and loans to governments they steer the policies of states. They manipulate governments by means of invisible threads, as if they were puppets.

The third aspect of modern society for which Jews were made responsible was that of culture, in the broadest sense of the word. The Jews are responsible for all phenomena of modern society: for the dissolution of traditional relationships of authority, family relationships and relations between the sexes, for the radical questioning of all traditional norms, for modern abstract art, for mass culture, for women's emancipation, for urbanisation and for psychoanalysis.

The Jews are responsible for everything. “The Jews are our misfortune” – this slogan which originated with Treitschke is the most pregnant formula of modern anti-semitism conceivable.

What needs to be grasped here is that anti-semitism is to be understood not only as a mere accumulation of anti-semitic stereotypes which exist alongside of one another but without any relation to each other. Rather, these stereotypes are related to one another within the framework of a specific structure of thought, one which conceptualises the world in a quite particular manner.

The first basic structural feature of the anti-semitic world view, as is already clear, is personification. All social relationships and processes are explained as the conscious work of evil people. The necessary corollary to such personification is the conspiracy theory.

If Jews are behind all the negative phenomena of modernity – and not only in Germany but also throughout the world – then an enemy who is active all over the world is automatically constructed. This enemy directs everything which happens, and must be almost omnipotent. As soon as societal relationships are explained in terms of personification, then the inevitable result is to think in terms of conspiracy theories.

The second basic feature of the anti-semitic world view is Manicheanism. This arises out of the interaction of three ideological components.

Firstly, everything which happens in the world is explained as the product of the antagonism between two principles: Good and Evil, Light and Darkness. According to this pattern, everything is posed in terms of the strict operations of a binary code. On the one side there is the alien and dangerous element: the Jew. He is the source of everything which is evil. On the other side, what automatically arises as the counterpart is the force of Good: one's own – German, French, Russian, etc. – “people”.

Secondly, Manicheanism means that the Jews are portrayed and/or demonised as the ultimate Evil, both by their very nature, and also in terms of them representing the ultimate existential threat. The victim then not only has all moral Right on his side, but also positively has the duty to act in self-defence against this Evil. In all anti-semitic writings the same theme is to be found: “It is five minutes to midnight – either we act now, or our demise is imminent.”

Thirdly, always included in Manicheanism is the eschatological perspective of redemption: if Evil is eradicated from the world, then everything will be fine and we will be rid of all problems. For this reason, from the very outset – i.e. at the time of the Kaiser, and not just under National Socialism – the perspective of eradication has been inherent in anti-semitism on an ideological level. That too is contained in Treitschke's saying, “the Jews are our misfortune”. Everything would be good if they did not exist.

The third basic structural feature of anti-semitism is the construction of the German, French, Russian ... "people" as a threatened collective which is counterposed to the Jews. This we-group is conceptualised as an essentially harmonious community, with an economy devoid of competition, politics devoid of arguments, and a culture which is neither confusing nor contradictory but which is an expression of the "nature of the people".

This thinking in terms of community and this concept of harmony are included in the concept of a "people" from the outset. The concept of the community "people - nation" is thereby an authentically anti-modern, reactionary counter-concept to modern society. What is of decisive importance is the fact that this notion of a "people" is the product of modern society, but also one which has no chance of realisation in modern society. Every construction of a "people" therefore - and this is confirmed by all recent research into nationalism - is dependent on the construction of an enemy, of a bogeyman.

With regard to anti-semitism what is important is the following: there are normal enemies and there is an ideal enemy. Normal enemies are other peoples: a prominent example here in Germany is the "hereditary enemy" France. Other examples would be the Poles or the Turks. There are conflicts with such enemies and there is a feeling of superiority over them. But, in principle, they are other peoples who have their own justification for their existence.

But Jews are no such normal enemy, they are the ideal enemy. They are not simply an opposing nation like France, which must be defeated in a war and from which Alsace-Lorraine must be taken, but no more than that. The Jews are the antagonistic enemy, the enemy of the nation in itself, the enemy which must be destroyed for the sake of the redemption of the world.

This is not a matter of coincidence. There is an internal logic to this. It is the Jews, after all, who personify the modern society which constitutes an obstacle to the emergence of the "national" we-community. They are therefore not some "nation" of principally the same type as other "nations" but merely different from them. They are the absolute anti-principle to the concept of "nation" itself. Their destruction is synonymous with the destruction of modern society and promises the creation of the "national" community.

A widespread misjudgement is the notion that a central feature of anti-semitism is the category of "race". But this category did not penetrate anti-semitism until relatively late, from about 1900 onwards, and anti-semitism with all its structural features had long existed before then. Destructive phantasies likewise do not date only from the racial-biological formulation of anti-semitism but were also held by all earlier anti-semites. Moreover, Jews were always conceived of as a community-by-descent. The notion of "race" merely represented an extreme variant of this principle.

Equally widespread is the notion that racism is the more general supra-concept, while anti-semitism is one of its sub-forms. But this too is inaccurate. It is a question of two completely different ideologies, even if both of them speak of race. If one considers the attributes with

which racism endows the Other, then it is clear that anti-semitism ascribes something completely different to the Jews.

Racism conceptualises the Other as inferior and uncivilised. He is the sub-human, he symbolises raw nature, physicalness, libidinal urges, unrestrained sexuality, emotion, low levels of intelligence, criminality, laziness, etc. The Other embodies undisciplined nature, the natural state – to which the counterpart is the civilised, libidinally disciplined, superior, more capable, virtuous modern individual.

What is attributed to “the Jew” is totally at odds with this. “The Jew” personifies modern society, its power, its compulsions. The Jew is therefore endowed with attributes such as a high and cunning intelligence, perverse sexuality, an effeminate body, illness, an absence of a home country, an absence of ties to others, a corrosive intellectuality, artificiality, fabulous power, individualism, materialism, and cold calculation.

The Jew embodies the power, the obligations and the demands of modern society. The Other in racism, however, embodies raw nature, which must be restrained.

Development of Anti-Zionism in the Federal Republic:

Immediately after 1945 a relative silence about, and refusal to face up to, the crimes of National Socialism and, in particular, the mass-murder of the Jews were dominant. From the end of the 1940s onwards there was support on the non-orthodox Left (such as within the SPD) for the demand for reparations for the Jews. Catholic and left-liberal elements were also active in support of this demand.

When the time finally came in 1953 for the German Parliament to ratify the Reparations Agreement which had been concluded with Israel, ratification was possible only because of the votes of the SPD, as Adenauer would not have found enough votes in his own camp. The German Communist Party also voted against the agreement.

In the SPD and the left-liberal spectrum in the following decades there was a widespread philo-semitism which glorified Israel. The Palestinians and their expulsion, on the other hand, were completely lost from view. The SPD in particular strongly argued for taking up diplomatic relations with Israel, which the Adenauer government put off for a long time in order not to create problems for its relations to the Arab states. Only in 1965 did the diplomatic recognition of Israel by the Federal Republic take place.

In the APO (Extra-Parliamentary Opposition), which was already beginning to take shape at that time, a more Israel-critical position was certainly noticeable. But this was coupled with a recognition of the right of Israel to exist, and a consciousness of historical responsibility.

The turning point, when the attitude of the New Left to Israel began to change rapidly, was the Six Days War of 1967: Israel defeated the armies of the surrounding Arab states in a pre-

emptive war, to the applause of the Western world and the Springer press, which was hated by the APO.

Already in 1967/68 the New Left was condemning Israel as an “imperialist-fascist state formation”, and blindly took the side of Al Fatah, which was granted the status of the revolutionary subject per se. All their actions were cheered on, and their statements – especially the Palestinian National Charter, in which the right of Israel to exist was explicitly denied – were reprinted without criticism.

It is true that at that time there were still critical voices from the “Old Left”, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Ernst Bloch, Herbert Marcuse and Jean Amery, who demanded that a differentiation be made between the existence of the state and the policies of the Israeli government. Even Ulrike Meinhof, as late as 1967, defined the threat by Arab states to destroy Israel as unsupportable. And Isaac Deutscher pointed to the “nationalist demagoguery” of the Arabs.

But such interventions no longer found any echo in the New Left. The turn to militant anti-Zionism had become unstoppable. From 1969 onwards the Palestine conflict was perceived purely as an integral part of the struggle of the oppressed peoples of the Third World against imperialism.

Already on 9th November 1969 – and the date had been consciously chosen – the “Black Rats/Tupamaros West Berlin”, a forerunner of the “2nd June Movement”, had struck their first “anti-Zionist” blow. They proudly announced in their statement of responsibility: “On the 31st anniversary of the fascist “Kristallnacht” several Jewish monuments in West Berlin were daubed with the slogans “Shalom and Napalm” and “El Fatah”. In the Jewish Community Centre an incendiary device was planted. True anti-fascism is clear and simple solidarity with the fighting Fedayeen. For the Jews expelled by fascism have become fascists themselves, and, through collaboration with American capital, they want to eliminate the Palestinian people.”

This did not in any way discredit anti-Zionism on the Left. On the contrary, in the course of the 1970s it experienced a boom. A lot of Palestine Solidarity Committees were set up. Their publications had martial titles such as “The Front” or “The Revolution”.

When a squad of the Palestinian organisation “Black September” took the Israeli Olympics team hostage in 1972 – several people were killed when the police made an unsuccessful attempt to free them – the RAF (Red Army Faction) expressed its enthusiasm for the exemplary character of this “anti-imperialist, anti-fascist and internationalist” action. Co-author of this document was Ulrike Meinhof – her biography is exemplary of the volte face of the New Left to blind anti-Zionism.

In 1976 there was a further significant event: the hijacking of a plane to Entebbe by a squad of the Palestinian PFLP, supported by two members of the “Revolutionary Cells”. In the plane “Revolutionary Cells” member Wilfried Bose organised the separation of the Jewish

– and not just Israeli – passengers from the non-Jewish ones. Palestinians were to be released from Israeli prisons under the pressure of this hostage-taking of Jews. Even this horrendous event – recalling other practices when Jews had been selected – provoked virtually no reaction on the German Left. Anti-Zionism remained en vogue.

The wave of indignation which was provoked by the Israeli army's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and by the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps was frightening in its compulsive need to equate Israel with National Socialism – an analogy which appealed not just to the Palestine Committees but also to the Greens.

But for the first time the headlines in the left press about a “Final Solution of the Palestinian Question” which Israel was putting into effect were subject to wide criticism from within the Left.

From then on, triggered by specific events, there occurred ever broader arguments about a left anti-semitism: 1987/88, when the anti-Israel propaganda of the Palestine groups enjoyed another boom as a result of the first intifada; in the course of the Gulf War of 1991 and the Iraqi rockets fired at Israel; and also after the so-called Al-Aqsa intifada which began in September 2000, since when anti-Israel voices have again become increasingly loud.

But, in opposition to this, alliances against anti-semitism and anti-Zionism have been active in numerous cities, with demonstrations, publications, and meetings about anti-semitism, past and present.

Ideological Foundations of Left Anti-Zionism:

In the 1970s and 1980s anti-Zionism was a basic and integral part of the Left's view of the world, even if you were not a member of a Palestinian group. At that time there was simply no criticism of anti-Zionism from within the New Left itself. It follows that this anti-Zionism must have been an authentic product of the left-wing view of the world which was dominant at that time – otherwise it would not have gone unnoticed for so long.

My main thesis, in brief, is: An important cause of the anti-semitic anti-Zionism and of its acceptance on the Left was a simplistic world view, the anti-imperialist world view, which formed the basis of a diffuse consensus within the Left. This considers itself to be thoroughly radical and revolutionary. But, on closer inspection, it is openly nationalistic and structurally anti-semitic. If the Palestine conflict is approached from the standpoint of this anti-imperialist world view, and if an attempt is made to explain the conflict within this scheme of things, then the inevitable result is a position which is anti-semitic in content

What does this simple anti-imperialist world view – so eminently suitable for distribution on a leaflet – look like? How does it interpret the world?

Society here is dominated by a monolithic power block, called state and capital, directed by a

small clique of odious “rulers”. They determine the policies, cook up evil plans, organise the exploitation and repression, satisfy the masses with social policies, and cloud their consciousness with their ideology, which is spread by the regimented bourgeois media. The “people” is oppressed, exploited, and indoctrinated, and therefore has just one true shared interest: the revolution.

At the close of the 1960s the APO understood itself as a vanguard which had achieved consciousness. It would challenge this dulling of the masses’ consciousness, enlighten them, open their eyes, and lead them to the revolution. But in 1968 the defeats of the APO became obvious. The Emergency Laws were passed, the Paris May was over after a few days, and even the anti-Springer campaign failed.

Increasingly, the APO became painfully conscious of the fact that social relations could not be so simply explained and changed, and that the proletarian masses did not want to be enlightened about their real needs. The hopes of speedy and fundamental change which had still been so effusive in 1967 were bitterly disappointed, and the revolutionary identity was imperilled.

The need for revolution therefore set off on a world tour, attaching itself to any and every national liberation movement in the so-called Third World. For it was there that it still appeared to be simple to draw a clear dividing line between “oneself and the enemy” (Mao Tse Tung), and the “popular masses” still appeared to be properly revolutionary.

The Left’s world view saw itself confirmed. The Evil was imperialism, conceptualised as a worldwide plot by the capitalist states under the domination of the USA. It was responsible for all exploitation and oppression in the continents of the Third World. The Good, on the other side, were “peoples” who wanted to achieve national liberation, who rose up against foreign rule and imperialist exploitation, and demanded their right to self-determination.

In the autumn of 1969 the Berlin underground magazine Agit 883 (with a circulation at that time of over 10,000!) published a series of articles by Dieter Kunzelmann under the heading “Letters from Amman”. Kunzelmann claimed to be writing from a Palestinian training camp. In reality, he was rumoured simply to have gone underground in Berlin. What was his ideal vision? “Here (in Palestine) everything is very simple, the enemy is clear, its weapons are visible, solidarity does not need to be demanded, it arises of its own accord.”

From now on the New Left identified itself completely uncritically with all possible liberation movements. It genuinely believed that these would achieve everything which had not been achieved here: the liberation from foreign rule, the revolution, the end of exploitation, socialism, and universal human emancipation. If it was no longer possible to shut one’s eyes to crimes such as the murder of millions of people in Cambodia, then one simply turned away in silence and without critical reflection, and looked to another national liberation movement as a new object with which to identify.

If one considers the basic structures of this anti-imperialist world view, then it is clear that it is very close to the structures of the anti-semitic world view. Especially in relation to the Third World there is a striking Manicheanism: a binary division into Good and Evil, US imperialism and peoples in struggle, accompanied by the notion of an unavoidable struggle until the final redemption, until the liberation, after which everything will be good.

Also just as apparent in the anti-imperialist world view is its tendency to personification. A small clique of evil US finance-capitalists determine politics across the world, which inevitably had to result in the conception of a comprehensive conspiracy of the metropolises against the Third World. "Peoples", on the other hand, were an absolutely positive referral point. They were the real existing Good, the object of identification by the Left here. They were united in struggle and would construct a harmonious, free, socialist society. The nationalism in this world view, the thinking in terms of people and nation, is obvious.

Given these basic features, the anti-imperialist world view is to be defined as structurally anti-semitic. It is true that "Jews" do not appear in it all. But the basic features of anti-semitism – Manicheanism, binary thinking, struggle and redemption, personification, conspiracy theory, and the positive referral to "people" – are contained in anti-imperialism.

The result of anyone who holds this anti-imperialist world view pouncing upon the Palestine-Israel conflict, apparently just one of many liberation struggles in the Third World, is that this structural closeness to anti-semitism becomes an affinity in terms of content. As a matter of necessity, the result must be the production of anti-semitic stereotypes.

For here too, in the Palestine-Israel conflict, the anti-imperialist world view identifies Good and Evil in its well-known manner: evil is capital, imperialism; good is the people. What happens if you travel to Palestine with this outlook?

Of course, you find the good Palestinian people. Israel, on the other hand, must be the Evil, mixed up with imperialism. As *Unsere Zeit*, the paper of the German Communist Party, explained in 1975: "The world is divided into two fronts in the Middle East. There are the Arab peoples, supported by the progressive people of the world, confronted by the Zionist circles, and the Jewish bourgeoisie and monopolies inside and outside of Israel, supported by the entire capitalist world." Within this beautiful duality, Israel could only be the essentially evil enemy.

Consequently, Israel was characterised as the "Garden of Evil, which is a single continuum of crimes against humanity." Zionism also functioned as a metaphor for Evil per se: "Zionism vigorously fends off a peaceful co-existence between peoples. Because of the monstrousness of Zionist aggression, unrestrained by any reason or humanity, Zionism is not only the irreconcilable and irreformable enemy of the Palestinians, it is also our enemy, it is the enemy of all people."

On the major Palestine solidarity demonstration held in Berlin in April of 2002 one of the

banners visible on it portrayed the head of Sharon peering out from the middle of the Star of David, with pointed hairy devil's ears, and vampire teeth dripping with blood. The demonisation of Israel to the point of absolute Evil is an indispensable element of anti-Zionism.

On the other side of this abstract Evil (capital, imperialism, Zionism) there is, of course, the concrete Good, the people. In 1989, for example, the "Middle East Group Freiburg" wrote: "All actions and demands prove the unity of the Palestinian people. Everything speaks in favour of this, and proves the integrity and the unity of this people. Israel is confronted by the entire people." Here too stands the united struggling people, against the abstract capitalist-imperialist Evil which goes by the name of Israel.

Of course, Israel cannot have a people. Otherwise one would have to admit that two rights to national self-determination are in conflict with each other. It would no longer be possible to make a clear-cut division between Good and Evil. It might even be necessary to search for a compromise. Therefore, Israel is not allowed to have a people.

The more conciliatory anti-Zionists were still prepared to admit the existence of a Jewish people. But this certainly had nothing to do with Israel. Israel was only "an artificial creation, which Zionism attempts to disguise as a home for all Jews." The more consistent faction of the anti-Zionists, on the other hand, challenged the existence of a Jewish people in general. The Jews were an "alleged people", which "had never existed".

In order to prove this, reliance was placed upon the previously mentioned Palestinian National Charter. In this the following was to be read: the characteristic and fundamental basis of a people are having "native territory" and an "identity" which is a "genuinely inextinguishable property. It is passed on from the parents' generation to their descendants." It was popular to quote this in anti-Zionist circles, and, equipped with such Blut und Boden conceptions, people distinguished between "genuine" peoples such as the Kurds or Palestinians, who had a natural right – one beyond question, and one worthy of support – to a state of their own, and the "ungenuine" people of the Jew-Zionists, who were denied this right.

The magazine Al Karamah excelled in presenting this in the most graphic terms: "What finally makes a people is its country, its history, its folklore, and its cultural habits and traditions. If you want to recognise the roots of a people, look at its dances, look at its folklore. The Zionists lack a unified folklore as they come from different parts of the world and from different cultural spheres. They do not constitute a nation, and have to acquire national characteristics through theft."

Once the situation had been thus defined, the conclusion was within reach. The Communist League, 1973: "The conflict in the Middle East cannot be solved other than through the destruction of the Zionist state." Or the SDS (Socialist German Student League) in Frankfurt, 1970: "Down with the chauvinist-racist state-construction Israel."

In anti-Zionist writings and pamphlets “Israel” was consistently put in inverted commas. This is something which had been learnt from the Bildzeitung, which, in putting GDR (German Democratic Republic) in inverted commas, thereby wanted to demonstrate that the GDR was a pseudo-state which should be got rid off. In the Federal Republic anti-Zionists did exactly the same with Israel. And in just the same way Communist Action in Vienna announced in 2002: “Peace in the region can come only if the imperialists stay out of it – which would also mean the collapse of the Israeli state.” The offensive denial of the right of Israel to exist is still to be found in hardcore anti-Zionism today.

But these positions are confronted by a problem. How, as someone of good conscience on the Left, can one demand the dissolution of the Jewish state, which understands itself as the state of the survivors of the Shoah? Consequently, the genocide of the Jews must be suppressed – and, for the Left, that means theorised away. By employing left-wing theory, this is relatively easy to achieve.

According to this theory, the Left, by definition, has nothing at all to do with anti-semitism. The latter is a bourgeois ideology, comes from above, and, like everything evil, has nothing at all to do with the proletariat. On the contrary, it is merely lying propaganda by the rulers to divert revolutionary hatred. And the mass murder of the Jews was also pushed to one side by means of left-wing ideology. One simply quoted Dimitroff’s definition of fascism: “Fascism is the dictatorship of the most reactionary and chauvinistic sections of finance capital”, etc., and decided not to see anything in National Socialism apart from it being an instrument of the capitalists for the purpose of exploitation.

All attention was focussed on the oppression of the proletariat under National Socialism, while the genocide of the Jews virtually never made an appearance. The “fascism theories” which were manufactured in the 1970s, especially by the K-groups [various Maoist groups], ended up as genuinely “Jew-free” analyses of fascism, in which Auschwitz as good as never got a mention.

The anti-Zionist Left responded equally sensitively to any recalling of Auschwitz. In 1979 German television broadcast, to great public acclaim, the US series “Holocaust”, which incorporated the theme of the genocide of the Jews into the story of a family. The KBW [one of the K-groups] considered this to be nothing but “Zionist propaganda”. The “Middle East Committee Heidelberg” warned of this “cunning attempt to legitimise the imperialist bridgehead of Israel” – the imperialist-Zionist conspiracy reached even into Hollywood’s film industry.

Once Auschwitz and anti-semitism had thus been dismissed as marginal issues of no concern to the Left, by having applied a dose of “left-wing theory”, it was possible to unthinkingly agitate against Israel and utterly shamelessly produce anti-semitic stereotypes. Thus, people wrote of the “Zionist world movement” and of the “Zionist multi-millionaires who meet up again and again in private conferences, in order to support Israel’s aggression”, and jauntily fantasised about the insatiable lust of Israel to dominate.

Some envisaged a “Greater Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates.” For others that was not enough: “For decades Israel’s declared goal is the Biblical-Judaic expansion of its influence across the whole of the Middle East, plus Zaire and South Africa, and Central and Latin America in the longer term perspective.” On a demonstration in January of 2002 the “Anti-Imperialist Co-ordination Vienna” carried the previously quoted banner, on which was written: “The goal of Zionist politics: World domination?!”

The anti-Zionists also considered themselves to be at risk from the Jewish domination of the press. It was a constant complaint that the “domination of the world’s media by Zionist propaganda means that every critical expression about the Zionist state of Israel can be silenced.” In Israel one saw only “an artificial creation of a parasitic character, achieved through stealing land and scrounging money.” Compared with the left anti-Zionists, Jamal Karsli, whose statements last year triggered a scandal, is nothing. [Karsli was a Green MP who accused Israel of using “Nazi methods”.]

After, I hope, it has become clear how the world view of anti-imperialism gives rise to anti-semitism as soon as it is applied to the Palestine conflict, I now turn to the question of how all this is linked to German nationalism on the Left.

The Left always understood nationalism as simply propaganda from above, by means of which the rulers attempted to legitimise attacks on other states, or to patch over domestic class conflicts. But the fact that there was a German people which also had shared interests, a German nation, or something like a national identity – all that was beyond question for the Left. And it is not just the writings of the KPD [Weimar Republic Communist Party], SPD or SED [GDR Communist Party] which testify to the Left’s need to identify with a “good German people”.

In the West German New Left there were nationalist tendencies as well. In the 1970s, for example, Rudi Dutschke wrote a series of articles about the “national question” in Germany. And already in the 1960s, taking a position close to a thoroughly right-wing one, Dutschke had seen a divided Germany as dominated by Soviet and US occupiers. Dutschke also lamented the “process of the dissolution of the historical and national identity by capitalist Americanisation”, and expressed the hope that “the struggle for national independence becomes an elementary part of socialist struggle in Germany.”

The Central Committee of the KPD/ML [another of the K-groups] even drew up a manifesto on the national question, with the grandiose title, “Germany for the German People”. This

explained: "We draw on the psychic essence of the German people, we draw on its diligence at work and its sense for order, on its scientific and cultural genius which has been demonstrated by our people so often, and which is the basis of the fame of the German nation."

The non-orthodox Left – the spontis, the autonomous, and the anti-imperialists – did not want to take as a point of reference the German nation or even the secondary virtues so esteemed by KPD/ML. But, all the more so, they were dependent on taking as a point of reference the struggling peoples in the so-called Third World. In their search for a collective revolutionary identity, they were the consistent supporters outside of Germany of any and every nationalism of liberation, and identified themselves across the board with all possible peoples.

The greater ones love for the German people, then, of course, the more clearly did the latter have to be relieved of the burden of Auschwitz by the Left as well. The strategies adopted were visible on the Left in general, and in the anti-Zionist fraction in particular.

[In an earlier part of his speech, omitted for reasons of space, Haury had argued that the post-war construction of a German national identity required suppression of the memory of Auschwitz, used by Haury as a metaphor for the Holocaust in general. The Left used two methods to "relativise" Auschwitz. One was to argue that there was nothing special about it (cf. American genocide of the indigenous population, or Turkish genocide of Armenians). The other method was to argue that Germans were victims as well (e.g. Versailles Treaty, Weimar Republic crises, Third Reich, bombing by the Allies).]

The first strategy for removing the burden of Auschwitz – "Others have perpetrated such crimes as well" – was child's play. By means of a left-wing theory of fascism, every capitalist state could be declared a crypto-fascist state. Military dictatorships in Greece, Chile or Turkey were casually labelled as openly fascist. And particularly the USA, the dominant capitalist power, was incisively branded as fascist. "USA – International Genocide Agency", or "SS – SA – USA" were the typical slogans on demonstrations. These leftist projections of fascism onto other states were nothing but the freeing of Germany from the burden of National Socialism.

The second strategy – "The Germans were just as much victims" – was likewise no problem in leftist theory. According to this theory, capitalists alone were to blame for the NS-regime, whereas the "German people" was the purest of victims.

In the mid-1970s, at a time when it had a left majority, the Evangelical Student Association declared: "The first victim of fascism was the German people itself." Around the same time the KPD [one of the K-groups] announced: "Right up until the end, German monopoly capitalism sucked dry its own people." And in 2000 the newspaper of the "Linksruck" sect stated: "It was not the Germans who gassed the Jews, but the SS. Those guilty of this crime are the functionaries of the Nazi state and all those who profited from it. The concept of a

German collective guilt for the Nazi crimes is a mockery of those millions who actively resisted."

In order to present the Germans as the victim-people with whom it is possible to identify, time and time again the Left theorises a National Socialism from which Germans are absent.

If other people are declared to be equally heinous perpetrators, and if Germans (and especially the German proletariat) are declared to be equally poor victims, what comes next is the demand to draw a line under the past. The New Left considered itself to be revolutionary and part of an anti-fascist tradition, to be young and belonging to a new generation. What did the past still have to do with it?

In 1973 the Palestine Solidarity Committee announced: "The young generation in the Federal Republic does not consider itself responsible for the Nazi crimes against European Jews." And in 1975 the Communist League seconded this sentiment: "Coming to terms with the past is a concept which the working class does not need. After all, it felt inflicted on itself in the cruellest and most blatant manner the sufferings of fascism and war."

The feat of unburdening achieved through the inversion of perpetrator and victim is, of course, at its most effective if the victims per se, the Jews, can be presented as the fascists of today. Jewish perpetrators are balsam for the German national consciousness. In this matter, the anti-Zionist New Left achieved truly pioneering work. Throughout the whole of the 1970s and 1980s a downright obsessive need to equate Israel with fascism manifested itself.

The SDS Heidelberg claimed that the Israeli government wanted to "treat the Arab peoples just as the Nazis had treated the peoples of Poland and the Soviet Union." The KPD labelled the Zionists as "the Nazis of our times, who want to make Palestine Arab-free". And the RAF wrote of "Moshe-Dayan-fascism – this Hitler of Israel."

In countless cartoons and in constantly new variants the Star of David was collapsed into a swastika. People talked of "Nazisrael" or of "Nazionism". In 1982, after the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, all left-wing papers referred to the "Israeli genocidal war". The Anti-imperialist Information Bulletin, the Arbeiterkampf, and TAZ carried headlines such as "Holocaust against the Palestinians" and "Final Solution of the Palestinian Question". In the late 1980s, without a shadow of embarrassment, the magazine Al Karamah claimed that "the fascist eliminatory measures taken by the Zionist settler state far exceed the measures taken by German fascism."

If you look today at the appropriate websites on indymedia, then you find Ariel Sharon with a Hitler moustache and hairstyle. On recent Palestine solidarity demonstrations, in Berlin last year for example, there has been no shortage of banners with slogans such as “Stop Sharon’s Final Solution”, “Stop the Israeli Holocaust in Palestine”, “The Spirit of Auschwitz Hovers over Palestine”, or the really quite poetic “Death is a Master from Israel”.

Once the Israeli Jews had been declared the Nazis of today, and the Palestinians had been declared the “Jews of the Jews”, then, with the best of anti-fascist consciences, the New-German Left could take up the anti-Israel struggle. Ominously they warned: “The Jews should not think that because of our deeds they have received some kind of licence to murder.” The Green Calendar declared: “Compared with the Zionist atrocities, the Nazi atrocities fade away,” and asked expectantly: “When will the Jews finally be taught a lesson they won’t forget?” The first step which it advocated was: “Don’t buy from Jews.”

How can German anti-Zionism be summed up?

The anti-imperialist world view of the New Left was characterised by Manicheanism, personification, conspiracy theory, and the counterposing of good “peoples” to evil finance capital. It was thereby structurally anti-semitic and openly nationalist. If the Palestine-Israel conflict is interpreted within this framework, then the structural similarity must concretise itself in a similarity of content.

It follows from this that the Palestinians are the good, established people, and Israel is just an imperialist bridgehead. The Jews have to be declared to be a non-people, which has allied itself with capitalism and imperialism. Inevitably, therefore, anti-Zionist pamphlets always talk about Jewish finance capitalists, or the Zionist propaganda machine, etc.

The insistent equations of National Socialism and Zionism demonstrate that, even in the case of the German Left, as soon as the issue of Israel came up, then an aggressive need for German normality, for drawing a line under the past, and for the unburdening of guilt came to light.

For these reasons Left and Right do not meet up anywhere so clearly as they do in their hostility to Israel.

This can be understood in a completely literal sense. When the RAF was quartered in Palestinian training camps in 1970, members of the [neo-Nazi] “Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann” were also being trained at the other end of the camp. Today neo-Nazis, Islamist fundamentalists and anti-imperialist left-wingers meet up on Palestine solidarity demonstrations.

And they also meet up in an ideological sense. "International Solidarity in the Struggle of the Palestinians against Zionism" is to be read on the homepage of "National Resistance, Ruhr". "Palestine – The People Must Be Victorious", likewise a well-known anti-Zionist slogan, is to be found on the homepage of the "Junge Nationaldemokraten".

In conclusion, I quote five characteristics of Jews, Israel, and/or Zionism: "Enemy of the world", "enemy of people", "bloodthirsty and power-hungry bastion against the peoples", "symbol of all evil" and "garden of evil". Three of the quotes are from "the Left", and two of them are from the Right (Hitler and Goebbels). But working out which are which is no easy thing.

This shows how short the road is from the "anti-imperialism of idiots" (Isaac Deutscher) to anti-semitism.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.

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